Even at your peak

You don’t remember this but

before you became, I became you.

Ages before you even sensed the sun-warmed surface,

I layered it with clay and stone and dirt

and grew great green forests upon it.

I sprang rivers within and guided their ever-changing flow,

watered generations that no longer exist

before you slurped in a single drop of morning dew.

Before you cast your first hint of shadow upon the ground,

I flooded entire oceans with water and salt and life

and filled them to depths so far from the sun that every day was night.

I breathed life into gill and lung

and swept countless wings on infinite journeys

before you felt your first breeze.

You tower above all of us now, you regal thing,

my tectonic crescendo

complete in your crystalline folds.

I do appreciate your majesty—

even in the absence of modesty—

because I remember when there was no you.

Before I mashed my insides together with all my might,

crushed them up up up,

squeezing and thrusting you closer to the sun than ever before.

Each of your jagged outcroppings

and all of your wind-worn ridges

were once me, only me.

You’ve become more

than the sum of my clay and stone and dirt propelled skyward.

Yes, you’ve grown your own great green forests and guided your own rivers.

But remember, young mountain,

you weren’t so much as a speck of dust

until I became you.

*Thanks to Adrienne Wolfert for the second line.*